

From: Jones, Amy
To: Whitley, David; Scott, John
CC: Dyer, Jay
Sent: 4/25/2014 10:42:24 AM
Subject: FW: [ALISED A VOTER ID] Terrific interview

From: Jose Aliseda [mailto:jlaliseda@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, April 25, 2014 10:35 AM
To: Jones, Amy
Subject: FW: Terrific interview

From: sherrysylvester@satx.rr.com
To: jlaliseda@hotmail.com
Subject: Terrific interview
Date: Tue, 13 Sep 2011 09:26:27 -0500

Jose – this is a terrific interview. You will be sorely missed next session. Best of luck going forward and please don't hesitate to call if ever I can help. Sincerely, sherry

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Jose Aliseda: The TT Interview

by [Ross Ramsey](#)

4 hours ago

Rep. [Jose Aliseda](#), R-Beeville, beat an incumbent Democrat last November to win his seat in the Texas House. Now, he says, he won't seek re-election, opting instead for a local race for district attorney that plays to his strengths as a former prosecutor and that keeps him at home where he can be with his family and keep an eye on his ranch and other interests. After seeing our interview with Democratic Rep. [Naomi Gonzalez](#) of El Paso, he offered another view — a Republican one — from a House freshman's chair. An edited transcript and the audio follow:

T: After a long election cycle and a remarkably tough session, what did you think of this adventure?
Aliseda: Well, when I was here, I liked it. I like the interaction with my colleagues. I didn't like some of the things. You know, it became pretty obvious early on that the truth didn't matter. You could make the truth at the mic. You could say whatever you wanted to say and depending on what was being reported, that was the truth. You could make allegations, you could make claims, and all of a sudden, those claims and allegations became fact.

TT: This was on the floor, or in the public?

Aliseda: Both. It was on the floor, in committees. It's not something that I'm used to, having been a prosecutor and having to adhere to the rules of evidence. Politics is more — how can I put it? — more of a show than a reality, and that's the unfortunate thing.

TT: Can you think of a major piece of legislation that you have in mind?

Aliseda: The voter ID bill, which is something I was very involved in, something I ran on when I was in my district. It's something I think that the people of Texas and the whole country expect, is to have some safeguards for their electoral system. In the committee hearing, we had people coming in and saying, "This is going to disenfranchise the poor and the elderly." We didn't have one poor or elderly come in and say that that was the fact. Even though we had state representatives who made the claim, "Well, my mother is not going to be able to vote." Well, bring your mother and have her testify. Let's hear that. So that became the mantra: "It's going to disenfranchise." The reality is, I thought it was actually going to improve the system.

The sonogram bill — something else I ran on is a pro-life platform. I thought the rhetoric became that we were going to force women to have sonograms. And the reality is, the sonogram is a normal part of the abortion procedure. It was an expected part of the abortion procedure. But all they had to say is that we were forcing the woman to have a sonogram when that wasn't the reality. It was already part of the medical practice. Those are the best two examples that chap my hide the most.

The budget debate. "Draconian" cuts. But, you know, not once did I hear from the opposition what they proposed, other than to raise taxes. And to me, that was something that, one, I didn't run on, raising taxes, but I thought, if anything, with our fragile economy that we would actually hurt things by raising taxes. So those are three pretty good examples, I think.

TT: You've said you would be coming back if the race for DA hadn't opened up. Reconcile that.

Aliseda: I was a county attorney for eight years. That makes me a prosecutor, a misdemeanor prosecutor. I was a county judge, I sat on the bench. I was on the Board of Pardons and Paroles for five years. When I was in the Navy, I was a JAG officer, a prosecutor and defense lawyer. So this is right up my alley. I've been in criminal law for a long time. I was on the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee [in the House].

TT: I get why you would do the prosecutor thing. Why would you come back to the House had that door not opened?

Aliseda: Because I think I was in a position to make a difference. I had already had a very good first year, or so I was told. One thing about me that I don't think, with all due respect to my fellow freshmen, we were initially intimidated when we came into the process — intimidated by seniority. They told us, "Look, your position as a freshman is to sit down and shut up." I don't think they knew what they had in the freshman class this year. The qualifications of our freshmen. I don't think they knew the frustration. Here we had campaigned a year. People had put us here for a reason. And then to be intimidated to the point of not being able to really make a difference.

It's funny how I got to be up there. After a day and a half of listening to the Democrats slam us for being racists and whatever name in the book they wanted to call us on the voter ID bill, somebody came and asked me, "Do you know something about this subject?" Well, I do know something about this subject. "Well, why don't you say something?" That's the day of the debate. Little did I know they put me up there to be the only person to say something in favor on the Republican side of the bill, other than the bill sponsor. If there had been some planning, I think we could have had several of us up there. But there was this perception, maybe rightly so, that, look, we've got the majority and we're going to get it through. But they don't understand that not only do we have to win the battle on the vote, we also have to win the public's perception of the subject. I've been in politics long enough to know that some of this is important. You have to sell the idea. I think we routinely would not be selling our ideas.

TT: What was your take on being a minority in the Republican Party? Is it even a distinction that should be made?

Aliseda: For me, it wasn't a distinction that should be made. I was voting my district and the state. The minority aspect of what I did was somewhere down at the bottom of my priorities. That's what I think was lost on both sides of the aisle. The Democrats somehow champion themselves as the party of the minorities, but the reality is that their policies have hurt our people, if that what you want to call it. What's good for the public in general is good for minorities. So it really didn't play that big a part in what I came up there to do. But the thing they could not take away was that I have a unique background. I'm an immigrant to this country, and I can speak Spanish, and I grew up in places where maybe I would have felt some bias or prejudice. But it hasn't held me back. It hasn't held my family back. So I don't understand why people have to walk around with a chip on their shoulder and make everything a racial or ethnic

issue.

TT: What do you think it would mean if more than half of the House next year is made up of freshmen and sophomores? Is there a perspective difference between people who are new and people who've been here for a while?

Aliseda: Oh, yeah. I notice that the people that have been here a long time, I think they have gotten so tired of the fight that it's not in them.

TT: On both sides?

Aliseda: On both sides. What happened in this session was that we had the votes, and the Democrats were such a minority that they were backed into a corner and they had to be so vocal and aggressive and use the rules to their advantage. If I had to give advice to seniority, I would say, "Let your freshmen go. Let them do what they were elected to do." That's what I'd like to see happen. We had six Hispanics and two blacks, as Republicans. We might lose several of them this time, either because like myself, we're going on to something else, or we were in marginal districts as it was. But I think that the fact that we were here in a pretty large number this time shows that people are looking at our ideas — that's the Republican Party's ideas — even minorities are. And I think we'll do better this next election for our candidates. We might not elect a number of minority candidates, but the Republicans will have some of that minority vote, I'm almost certain.

TT: Does a Republican win your new district?

Aliseda: I think so. I think it's a 54 percent [Republican] district. A Republican's going to win. It's a very conservative district, if it stays the same. I don't know what the courts are going to do.

TT: Tell me what your takeaway from the session was, and if you had a magic wand, what you would change? And what issues do they not address that they ought to?

Aliseda: School finance. We need to come up with a good school finance agenda, or whatever you want to call it. That happens to be one of the reasons we got into a hole and have been in a hole for some time, is that the school financing and funding formula is not a good formula. We have this structural deficit with this franchise tax vs. the ad valorem taxes. I'd like to see them really work this coming session on that. More importantly, I'd like to see somewhat of a shakeup. If Speaker Straus is still speaker, to look at the possibility of putting some different chairs. I wish the Democrats wouldn't be in such a position that they feel their backs are against the wall, that we wouldn't have so many bomb-throwers and procedural maneuvers and instead let the system work, the debate work. And I'd like to see the actual committee system work in that, you want to make an allegation, bring in the evidence. I kept screaming for the evidence. I want it, because that's what I'm used to and that's what I think the public is used to. The problem is that the press picks out the soundbites. It does very little to investigate the facts behind the soundbites. The other thing I'd like to see is I'd like to see more fair coverage on the issues that are actually going on and not always have a — how can I put it? Because the Democrats were so vocal, they were the ones getting interviewed.

You know, there was something going on behind the scenes that y'all were probably not aware of. I was getting talked to by Telemundo and Univision after every debate on a major issue. They were coming to me because, one, I was a conservative and I could offer the counterpoint, and I could speak Spanish. This was national. They were putting our debates on voter ID, on the sanctuary cities bill, they were putting them out nationally. I think it's unusual that here they're coming to me, but our local press here and our national press is not really talking to the Republican side of the issue. Whoever has the loudest and the most objectionable statement, they go to them first. Maybe that's the way things operate. I don't know.

TT: Has that turned public opinion in a particular way?

Aliseda: I'm not a fan of the press. I do think that they have a bias and that they affect public opinion by their slant. Yes, we think it does affect public opinion, because if you read something over and over, it becomes fact. If you keep repeating something over and over, it becomes fact. So that's why the word "draconian cuts" — how draconian were they? We were able to do it. You know the measure of this budget is going to be how bad it is for the next two years. I suspect that all of these, quote, teachers who claimed they were going to be fired are still on the payroll. I know they are in my districts. And I'm supposed to have a poor district. The school districts had plenty of money in their reserve funds. What they wanted was for the state to use its first. So they claim they were laying off teachers and they probably did lay them

off for a short while, but they hired them right back. So, once again, I go back to, let's deal with facts and not play these drama games.

TT: Am I leaving something out that you wanted to hit?

Aliseda: Not really. I got a little bit off of my chest.